



FROM THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Secretary Snow G8/BMENA statement

Today I attended a meeting with my colleagues from the G8, the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) and key international institutions. We continued what has developed into an energetic dialogue on how we can harness more economic freedom to bring greater prosperity in the region. More than ever, I was impressed by the consensus that the region must lead the reform effort and encouraged by the building momentum for market-oriented reform. Many countries spoke of new reforms and plans; Egypt's Minister Moheildin spoke particularly impressively.

Our discussion also focused on the progress on the several pragmatic initiatives of the G8/BMENA partnership. Ministers welcomed the first meeting of the Network of Funds -- a collaborative initiative amongst multilateral and regional financial institutions to better coordinate development finance and provide policy advice to governments. I joined my colleagues in thanking the Arab Monetary Fund for leading the initiative and in looking forward to a concrete work program for these efforts at our next meeting.

My fellow ministers and I were pleased to hear about the progress made on the Private Enterprise Partnership facility of the International Finance Corporation. This initiative is already providing valuable technical assistance to governments, financial institutions and small businesses in support of more vibrant private sectors in BMENA countries. The region's governments stress that private sector growth is the best means to meet the job aspirations of their growing young populations. The IFC is setting measurable output targets for itself in the implementation of its project activities. I supported this and encouraged the IFC to achieve these targets. I am also very encouraged by the financial support for this initiative coming from the region; I thanked Kuwait and the Islamic Development Bank in particular.

We recognized the good work of the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) in promoting best-practice microfinance in the region through programs supported by the G8/BMENA partnership. CGAP is continuing with assessment missions throughout the region and has established a microfinance training center in Jordan.

The World Bank presented its excellent work on the investment climate in the region. Doing more to welcome private investment -- both domestic and foreign -- is a key to more rapid growth and job creation. This presentation was complemented by a presentation by Mr. Shafik Gabr, an Egyptian businessman and head of the Arab Business Council. This Council is also spearheading a private sector and G8/BMENA initiative -- the Investment Task Force. Together with the regional governments and the OECD, the task force is working on investment policy reform. Ministers look forward to continuing our dialogue on these issues.

We agreed to come together again later this year. Our next meeting will be another opportunity to review progress of all these initiatives towards promoting economic prosperity in the region. It is very encouraging to partner with the region and my G8 colleagues in these exciting initiatives.

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